

## Message Text

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13

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 /029 W

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R 210840Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3960

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 5217

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB ID

SUBJECT: FOREIGN WORKERS

1. DOMESTIC POLITICAL SENSITIVITY OVER EMPLOYMENT OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN INDONESIA WAS STRESSED BY RECENTLY APPOINTED CHIEF OF FOREIGN LABOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OF GOI MANPOWER DEPARTMENT (SAMSURI) DURING COURTESY CALL BY EMBOFF.

2. WHILE DECLINING TO PROVIDE STATISTICAL DATA MAINTAINED BY HIS OFFICE UNTIL HE HAD APPROVAL FROM HIS DIRECTOR GENERAL, SAMSURI SAID THAT THERE ARE ROUGHLY 16,000 WORK PERMITS ISSUED TO FOREIGN WORKERS. MAJOR NATIONALITIES INCLUDE FILIPINO, MALAYSIAN, KOREAN, AND JAPANESE. ABOUT TEN PERCENT OF WORK PERMITS ARE HELD BY AMERICANS, MAINLY EMPLOYED IN PETROLEUM INDUSTRY, CITING CRITICISM OF EMPLOYING FOREIGN WORKERS FROM PARLIAMENTARY SOURCES AS WELL AS "MAN ON THE STREET," SAMSURI EXPLAINED THAT GOI IS VERY CAUTIOUS IN GIVING ANY PUBLICITY TO MAGNITUDE OF PROGRAM, OR BREAKDOWNS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN.

3. SAMSURI CONCEDED THAT FOREIGN WORKERS ARE INDEED NECESSARY TO INDONESIA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PARTICULARLY WHEN QUALIFIED INDONESIANS ARE NOT AVAILABLE. MAJOR PROBLEM AREA ON ISSUANCE OF WORK PERMITS IS IN FORESTRY, WHERE MANY MALAYSIANS AND FILIPINOS

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ARE USED DESPITE AVAILABILITY OF INDONESIANS WHO COULD BE TRAINED

IN RELATIVELY SHORT PERIOD OF TIME FOR SKILLS REQUIRED. HOWEVER?  
HE BEMOANED THE FACT THAT THE AVAILABLE INDONESIANS LIVE IN JAVA AND  
REFUSE TO ACCEPT EMPLOYMENT IN FAR-OFF KALIMANTAN, WHERE THE  
FORESTRY INDUSTRY IS CENTERED.

4. COMMENT/ISSUANCE OF WORK PERMITS MAY WELL BECOME INCREASINGLY  
CONTROVERSIAL TOPIC, ALTHOUGH TOTAL NUMBER OF FOREIGN WORKERS  
IS RELATIVELY SMALL, THERE IS RESENTMENT AGAINST THEIR EMPLOYMENT,  
PARTICULARLY IN SEMI-SKILLED JOBS, WHICH GENERALLY ARE HELD BY  
WORKERS FROM NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. CRITICISM OF IMPORTING  
EXECUTIVE/MANAGERIAL PERSONNEL IS ALSO HEARD ON GROUNDS THAT  
INDONESIANS SHOULD BE TRAINED FOR THESE POSITIONS AS WELL. GOI IS  
CONFRONTED WITH DIFFICULT TASK OF BALANCING NEED TO ALLAY CRITICISM  
OF FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM WITH GENUINE NEED FOR FOREIGN SKILLS TO  
ACHIEVE ECONOMIC GOALS AND ATTRACT FOREIGN INVESTMENT. ALTHOUGH  
NO CHANGES IN POLICY HAVE BEEN PUBLICLY INDICATED SO FAR, GOI  
ADMINISTRATION OF FOREIGN LABOR PROGRAM MAY BE MOVING TOWARD MORE  
RESTRICTIVE PRACTICES, IN RECENT MONTHS EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED  
COMPLAINTS FROM U.S. BUSINESS FIRMS CONCERNING GROWING DIFFICULTIES  
IN RENEWING WORK PERMITS FOR EXPATRIATE EMPLOYEES AND OBTAINING  
APPROVALS FOR NEW APPLICATIONS. NEWSOM

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